



City of Rowlett

Meeting Minutes

City Council

Planning and Zoning Commission

4000 Main Street
Rowlett, TX 75030-0099
www.rowlett.com

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Thursday, November 3, 2011

6:00 P.M.

Municipal Building – 4000 Main Street

As authorized by Section 551.071 of the Texas Government Code, this meeting may be convened into closed Executive Session for the purpose of seeking confidential legal advice from the City Attorney on any agenda item herein.

The City of Rowlett reserves the right to reconvene, recess or realign the Regular Session or called Executive Session or order of business at any time prior to adjournment.

Council Present: Mayor Gottel, Mayor Pro Tem Phillips, Deputy Mayor Pro Tem Kilgore, Councilmember Davis, Councilmember Pankratz and Councilmember Miller

Council Absent: Councilmember Gallops

Commission Present: Chairman Sheffield, Commissioner Peebles, Commissioner Charles, Commissioner Jeffers and Alternate Commissioner Tune

Commission Absent: Vice-Chairman Landry, Commissioner Crawley, Commissioner Alexander, Alternate Commissioner Meyer and Alternate Commissioner Starks

1. CALL TO ORDER

1A. City Council

Mayor Gottel called the meeting to order at 6:02 p.m.

1B. Planning and Zoning Commission

Chairman Rick Sheffield called the meeting to order at 6:03 p.m.

2. WORK SESSION ITEM

- 2A. Staff and the consultant team lead by Townscape Town Planning and Urban Design will provide the City Council and Planning and Zoning Commission with training regarding Form Based Codes.

The Planning Manager came forward to introduce Dennis Wilson of Townscape Town Planning and Urban Design. Mr. Wilson explained that he would be giving a brief overview of Form Based Codes, some of the key standards and review processes and procedures. He stated that Form Based Codes are used because people are attracted to places that "feel good", are comfortable and provide the opportunity for social interaction and that truly great places have certain characteristics, some accidental and some designed including land use mix, openness, continuity of facades, street design, handling of parking and flexibility with organic feel. He stated that the goal is to design the public realm and provide flexibility and sustainability through quality architecture and construction and flexible buildings that facilitate re-population. Mr. Wilson noted that Form Based Codes are based on transects and de-emphasize use and setbacks and instead emphasize form. Form Based Codes ensure sustainability through applying timeless principles such as creating great streets, blocks and massing, versatile building/infrastructure, mixing of uses and introducing public open space & clustering. Mr. Wilson noted that the key to attracting quality developers was to have straightforward ordinances, standards in place with no necessity for additional approvals, quick development approvals, and consistent high quality standards for all who develop and City participation in risk of creating a special new district. The key standards of Form Based Codes are streetscapes, block faces, civic spaces, buildings, uses, parking and signs. Streets should incorporate opportunities to "Meet and Greet" with classic elements such as windows at grade along all street faces, windows above to be oriented vertically, trees and awnings to provide shade and brick, stone and stucco construction. Block faces should encourage landmark features at intersections and view termini and uses should create a synergy between and provide a variety of housing and business types, size and affordability to meet life cycle needs, changing demographics and preferences and changing work patterns. Mr. Wilson presented charts depicting population changes in males and females across all age group and reviewed some of the changing preferences among these groups. Proximity to open spaces, trails, retail services, schools and transit should be offered to create premiums for properties. Mr. Wilson gave examples of neighborhoods offering variety through size, type and layout and presented charts illustrating value increases through these amenities.

Chairman Sheffield requested clarification on the chart depicting cost per square in large homes versus smaller homes and Mr. Wilson stated the smaller buildings had a higher value per square foot and generally spent fewer days on the market.

Councilmember Miller inquired about parking for garages in the neighborhoods and Mr. Wilson stated that garages come off the lane but on wider lots there is the possibility for driveways through the lot to garages in back or recessed from the front façade. Councilmember Miller asked about parking and traffic on more commercial streets and Mr. Wilson responded that consolidated parking would be the key.

Mr. Wilson stated that with Form Based Codes buildings should be flexible for different uses over time with quality materials and form and create a distinctive destination. Ground floor must be constructed of durable materials and when use is retail at-grade it should be accentuated and have maximum leasable area for non-residential of X s.f. with windows at grade to be between 30% and 70% of façade. When use is flex space at-grade it should have a minimum of 15 feet floor to floor with canopies along 75% of façade and windows at grade to be between 60% and 80% of façade. Residential at-grade needs the ground floor a minimum of two feet above sidewalk to separate private space and a 14-foot setback from front build-to line; 8 feet for patio, stoop and stair, and 6 feet of landscape. These structures should have windows with a view of sidewalk and street for security and interest and handicapped accessible units with a low fence with gate. Mr. Wilson presented examples of each of the building types including single family, patio home, town home, live-work, mixed residential, commercial, mixed use and flexible loft space. Mr. Wilson discussed civic space including neighborhood open spaces, trails and parks and public space for community gathering. Parking elements should hide surface parking, maximize on-street parking and parking structures should be lined with buildings. Keys to parking include consolidating and shared parking, central parking areas, limit assigned spaces and amount of parking that can be provided. Parking elements should also ensure ease of parking accessibility.

Alternate Commissioner Tune inquired if it was common to provide different parking for different types of vehicles, for example electric cars versus gasoline cars and Mr. Wilson stated that he knew of a few corporations that did that but it was not very common.

Mr. Wilson noted that signs should be appropriate for walkable areas. He presented visual examples of how an area can change through Form Based Codes and reviewed the process and procedures for implementation including framework plans, regulating plans, development plans, building permits and the review process.

Councilmember Pankratz asked if through the control of building materials, the design was being dictated and Mr. Wilson responded that the developer should have freedom of design but that durable materials should be required and some materials can be required that would provide continuity in an area.

Chairman Sheffield expressed concern that some buildings may not be attractive due to color or similar characteristics and Mr. Wilson stated the goal is a long-term development and colors may be changed with new owners.

Councilmember Miller noted that the City needs "charm" and it would have to be created through development.

Mayor Gottel asked for clarification if the City would have the authority to define the type of structures and Mr. Wilson replied that the City would determine the materials and could require certain amounts of certain materials but that would limit the possibilities and he would caution against it.

City Manager Lynda Humble noted that Form Based Codes would allow the City to be as restrictive or flexible as the area needed.

Mr. Wilson stated that once streets, walkways and civic spaces are in place the buildings fade into the environment.

Mayor Pro Tem Phillips cautioned against being too restrictive causing the end result to be "cookie cutter."

Deputy Mayor Pro Tem Kilgore noted that regulations could be defined but the end result won't be realized until the end.

Mayor Gottel, Chairman Sheffield, Mayor Pro Tem Phillips, Deputy Mayor Pro Tem Kilgore and Commissioner Peebles discussed that attractive versus unattractive is subjective and that all development in an area would need a cohesive look.

Staff noted that the regulations will be written and refined over the next six to eight months before actual adoption as code.

Councilmember Pankratz commented that the developers will need to commit more to a project due to the requirement for more detail design and quality materials.

Mr. Wilson noted that with requirements for the amount of glass at grade, materials and other elements such as canopies a quality result could be achieved without the need to dictate style.

Ms. Humble presented a photo of a neighborhood and asked if there was anyone in the room that would not want to live there and noted that the development pictured would not be allowed by the current code due to setback requirements, material restrictions, landscaping and building design.

Mr. Wilson suggested the addition of an Urban Design Officer to aide City staff in working with developers under the new codes. Mr. Wilson concluded that the keys to successful Form Based Codes were to create of a sense of "place" and "identity", include a mix of land uses and a variety of housing types, be pedestrian, bicycle and auto-friendly, have strong design and development standards with a balance of standards and process that requires and rewards good development.

Ms. Humble discussed future efforts to evoke community involvement in the next steps of the process.


3. ADJOURNMENT

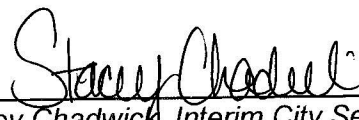
3A. City Council

Mayor Gottel adjourned the meeting at 7:42 p.m.

3B. Planning and Zoning Commission

Chairman Sheffield adjourned the meeting at 7:42 p.m.



Todd W. Gottel, Mayor

Stacey Chadwick, Interim City Secretary

Date Approved: December 6, 2011